

Congressman Baird Secures Approval for Local Ports, Flood and Erosion Control Projects (June 22, 2005)

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Brian Baird today secured authorization for five local projects in the Water Resources Development Act of 2005 (WRDA).

"This bill is critical to the safety of many coastal communities in Southwest Washington and to the success of a number of key industries," said Congressman Baird. "This bill protects local communities from devastating floods and erosion, and keeps our ports open for business."

WRDA passed out of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, on which Congressman Baird sits, and is scheduled to move to the House floor for a vote.

Congressman Baird secured authorization for the following Southwest Washington projects:

Centralia Flood Control Project

Congressman Baird secured approval for the Centralia Flood Control Project, which aims to solve chronic flooding problems throughout the Chehalis River basin. Twice in the last ten years, Interstate 5 (I-5) and the north-south railway have closed for three days at a time due to flooding, at a cost of more than \$50 million per day. The authorization of the Flood Control Project provides state and local partnerships the support they need to continue their efforts to provide a solution to this life-threatening and expensive problem.

Ilwaco and Baker Bay Siltation

Congressman Baird secured authorization to study increased silt deposits in Baker Bay and Ilwaco Harbor to determine if they are the result of a federal navigation project. If the study finds the siltation is the result of the federal project, WRDA also authorizes plans to mitigate the siltation.

The Port of Ilwaco is a critical component of the local fishing, forestry, and farm economy of rural Pacific County. The Port provides hundreds of direct jobs in primary industries that bring economic growth to the community. Navigation improvements by the Army Corps of Engineers during the past several decades, including the construction of the North, South, and A Jetties and the pile dikes in Baker Bay, have diverted the flow of the Columbia River away from Baker Bay and Ilwaco. These actions have contributed to increased silt deposits in Baker Bay and Ilwaco Harbor that requires frequent dredging.

Strawberry Island Campground, Skamania County

Congressman Baird secured authorization to plan, design, and construct a campground at the western tip of Hamilton Island, Skamania County. The Strawberry Island Campground, located within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), will house shower facilities, flush toilets, security lighting, entrance station, dump station, and other amenities.

The Corps of Engineers at Bonneville Lock and Dam has provided the visiting public with quality day use recreational opportunities for over 60 years. Current annual visitation to the Visitor Center is approximately 600,000. Conservative sources have estimated that during the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration years of 2003 through 2006, visitation to the area will double as tourists follow the route of the Corps of Discovery. Because of the lack of overnight camping facilities at the dam, some visitors try to create their own accommodations in parking lots and gravel areas at the dam, resulting in unhealthy, unsafe, and illegal situations. There are currently no other Corps operated campgrounds in the state of Washington along the Columbia River.

Puget Island Shoreline Protection

Congressman Baird secured \$1 million to protect homes and property on Puget Island threatened by severe erosion problems that traffic on the federal navigation channel has caused. This funding would enable the Army Corps of

Engineers to place dredged material along permitted portions of Puget Island to protect existing economic and environmental resources from erosion.

Historically, dredged material was placed along the shoreline of Puget Island about every 10 years, with the last placement occurring in 1987. Due in part to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) designation of critical habitat for Endangered Species Act listed species, dredged material is no longer placed in this area.

Erosion Protection for Shoalwater Bay

Congressman Baird secured ongoing authorization for a project that will provide coastal erosion protection, including ecosystem habitat restoration, for the tribal reservation of the Shoalwater Bay Tribe and vicinity on Willapa Bay.

The Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe continues to live on a small, federally recognized reservation on Washington's coast. Over the past few decades, the Tribe has lost lands and subsistence habitat due to erosion, including intertidal habitat which is included within the defined reservation boundaries. This authorization would modify the existing project under WRDA to ensure ongoing Congressional support of the project and establish the need for essential ecological habitat restoration.

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